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# MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS BULLETIN

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JANUARY, 1905

## Notes.

The exhibition of early engraving in America will continue in the Print Rooms until February 5. An exhibition of French Lithography will be opened about February 15, the examples shown being all selected from the Museum collection.

Early in December last an experiment looking toward the new Museum, and one which may perhaps be the forerunner of more extensive tests, was undertaken in the coloring of the First Picture Gallery. Incidentally, some architectural modifications of the old room were taken in hand with a view to finding a more becoming proportion between the extent of the wall and that of the picture surfaces. The results show a gallery not far removed in proportion from what may be considered advantageous in a top-lit room of normal extent, but which in color may still be thought of indeterminate value. Such neutral backgrounds for pictures, now widespread in Europe, must by no means be taken to have supplanted the reds and violets of tradition; rather they indicate an alternative essay in quest of new possibilities of installation. The color fixed upon here is the warm green often found in old Italian damasks, broken with a powder of darker and more neutral hue, with the purpose of gaining the depth and variety not afforded by single painted surfaces.

Mr. Okakura-Kakuzo, of the Imperial Archaeological Commission of Japan, who has been engaged for some months in the study of the Japanese and Chinese paintings at the Museum, gives in the present BULLETIN his conclusions as to the quality and range of the collection. Mr. Okakura's testimony emphasizes the function which these paintings, and the Museum as their guardian, may in future perform in promoting in the Western world a sympathetic comprehension of Eastern art.

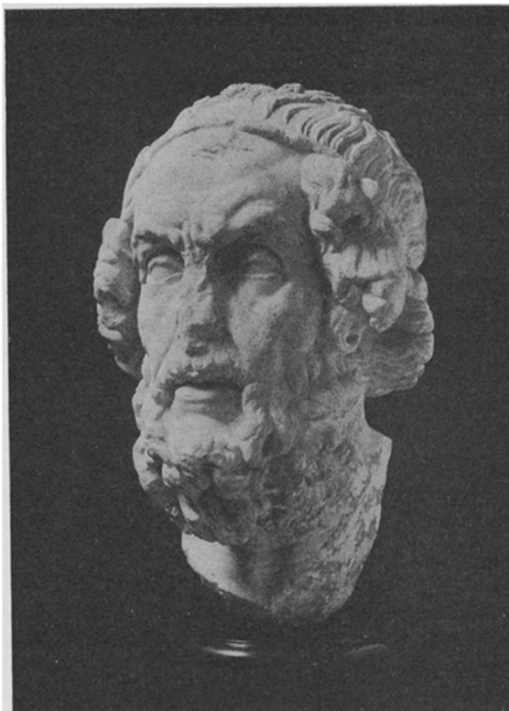
During the months of November and December the Museum was visited by 40,741 persons, or 1,528 more than in 1903, when the number was 39,213. In these two months there occurred eight Sundays, on one of which, Christmas Day, the Museum was closed, leaving seven effective holidays, as compared with November and December of last year, when there were nine. Sunday visitors numbered 14,235 in November and December of this year and 18,580 for the same months last year.

The total number of admissions to the Museum during the past year was 248,235, including 173,188 on Saturdays and Sundays, when the Museum is open free, and 21,119 paid admissions. The average number of Sunday visitors was 2,239. The figures in the preceding year were: Total, 295,416; Saturdays and Sundays, 198,806; and 31,523 paid admissions. The average on Sundays was 2,407.

The number of free tickets issued during the year to admit teachers in public schools with their pupils on all days was 1,025. Annual tickets numbering 2,084 were granted to instructors and students in colleges and schools; 256 to artists; 567 to special students; and 76 to classes, etc. The number of persons benefited and schools affected is greater than in previous years.

The current expenses for the year were \$82,034.86. The total received for annual subscriptions amounted to \$13,355, an amount greater by \$418 than that of the previous year.

## Two Greek Marbles Recently Acquired.



HEAD OF HOMER.

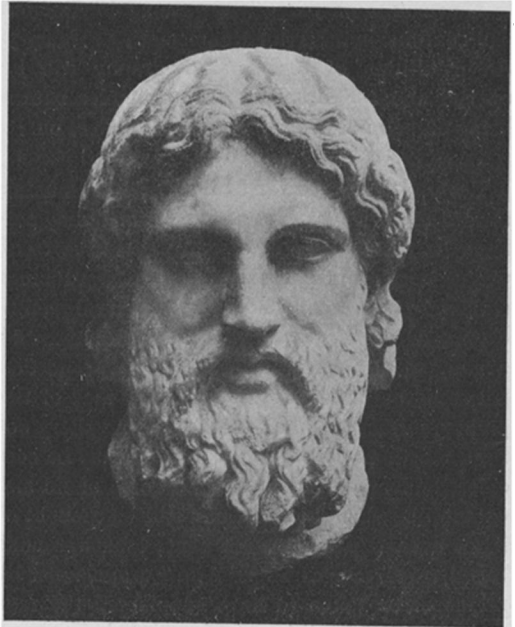
Among the Greek marbles acquired by the Museum last year are two of exceptional importance. The first of these is the head of

Homer, reproduced above, which is now exhibited in the Room of Greek Bronzes, Coins, etc. This was purchased of a private collector in England, by whom it was shown at the exhibition of Greek art in the Burlington Fine Arts Club of London, in 1903 (Catalogue No. 39), that being its only appearance in public before it came to the Museum. It is of heroic size, and is executed with such spirit and power, such an absence of anything dry or perfunctory in the modelling, that technically it deserves to rank among the best of the extant heads of the poet, while the warm, creamy color of the surface brings out the beauty of the workmanship with unusual effectiveness.

This head displays a curious and interesting combination of idealism and realism that is characteristic of the art of the age in which it was produced — the so-called Hellenistic period, which followed the death of Alexander the Great in 323 B. C. As a portrait it was necessarily purely ideal, since the art of portraiture was unknown in Greece in the time of Homer, and consequently no portrait of him could have survived from his day. Such scanty descriptions of him as are to be found in literature are probably wholly imaginative, except possibly in the matter of his blindness. The earliest allusion to this appears to have been in the hymn to the Delian Apollo, which Thucydides and Aristophanes believed to have been written by Homer, and in which the author speaks of himself as a "blind man" (line 172).

Ideal figures of the poet were made in the fifth and fourth centuries, though nothing definite is known about them; but it was reserved for the sculptors of the Hellenistic period, with their intense love of realistic detail, to take the literary traditions and out of them create the type so splendidly illustrated in this head, in which the physical characteristics of old age are represented with the utmost elaboration, yet with a skillful avoidance of any suggestion of senility. The face, though furrowed by time, is full of dignity, and intellectual force is manifested in the broad, well-rounded shape of the skull. It is interesting also to observe how cleverly and unmistakably blindness is indicated in the eyes, in spite of the fact that they are open, by the strained, sightless manner in which they peer out of their deep sockets. In the representation of this infirmity, and in the minute delineation of the shrunken muscles of the face, with every care that it should be anatomically correct, we have typical specimens of the kind of problems which certain schools of late Greek sculpture loved to set themselves.

(For the data relating to the portraiture of Homer, and a list of the extant portraits of him, the student is referred to J. J. Bernoulli, *Griechische Ikonographie*, I., 1901, pp. 1, ff.)

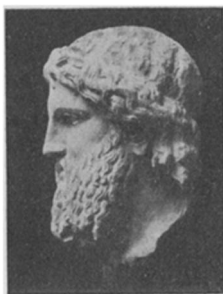


COLOSSAL HEAD OF ZEUS.

The second of the two marbles alluded to above is a colossal head of Zeus, which is placed for the present in the Corridor, near the eastern staircase. This is said to have been found on the site of Mylasa, a town in the southwest part of Asia Minor, not far from Halikarnassos, and it has been published in Brunn-Bruckmann's *Denkmäler*, Nos. 572, 573, with a brief essay by Furtwängler. Since its arrival here the missing portion of the nose has been restored in plaster.

The fracture at the base of the neck shows that this head is a fragment, and it probably formed part of a large statue. The forward bend of the neck also suggests that the figure was seated rather than standing. The style and execution of the modelling indicate that it is of pure Greek workmanship, dating from about the middle of the fourth century B. C. It is the production rather of a fine school than of a great master; and the technical characteristics being those of the school of Athens, there is much probability in the suggestion which has been offered, that it was the work of one of the Athenian sculptors who were employed upon the decorations of the famous tomb of Mausolos, in the neighboring city of Halikarnassos, to the sculptures of which it bears considerable resemblance.

To us, however, its chief interest lies in the fact that it is a copy, and the only one now known in sculpture, of the head of Pheidias's great statue of the Olympian Zeus. It has always been regarded as a curious fact, not easy to explain, that although that statue was unquestionably the most famous work of antiquity, no copy of it had survived to our time. Most of the familiar heads of Zeus are of a distinctly later type, and of a wholly different style of art from that of Pheidias, and our knowledge of the character of the head of his Olympian statue was limited to what could be learned from the meagre descriptions of it in ancient writers, — who seem to have been chiefly impressed by its mild countenance, — and from the representation of it on a late coin of Elis. For the sake of comparison a drawing of that coin and a profile view of our head are reproduced side by side below, and the resemblance speaks for itself. Too much accuracy of detail is not to be expected from so small an object as a coin, yet we find the same calm, placid character in the face, the same low brow, with the hair carried in gentle waves along the cheek and falling in curls behind the ears; the moustache falls in the same manner about the mouth, and in the coin as well as in the marble the beard appears to have been modelled in parallel wavy lines, slightly reminiscent of the archaic period. Our head, however, is not to be regarded as an exact copy of the Olympian, since it displays certain characteristics in the modelling which, as stated above, belong unmistakably to the fourth century. These show that the sculptor modified the type somewhat to conform to the taste of his own age, notably in the softness of the skin and the tendency towards effeminacy in the expression. Nevertheless, in spite of these shortcomings, it brings us nearer to the original than any work yet known, and is therefore a most valuable possession for the Museum.



### The New Velazquez.

The Committee on the Museum makes the following statement with regard to the Velazquez

portrait, believed to represent Philip IV. of Spain, now hung in the First Picture Gallery :

The purchase of the picture was authorized by the Committee by cable of September 27, 1904, to Dr. Denman W. Ross, a member of the Committee, then in Madrid, in response to a cable from Dr. Ross, stating the offer of the picture, and its high quality. The purchase was made by Dr. Ross, after examination of the picture and comparison of it with others by Velazquez in the Prado, upon the evidence which the painting itself afforded of its beauty and genuineness.

An attack on the genuineness of the picture was made in an anonymous communication received by the Museum in the month of November. The Committee has endeavored to obtain the name of the writer without success.

The picture has since been submitted to a number of painters and critics of painting, both of New York and Boston, who are entitled to be considered judges in such a matter by reason of their familiarity with and study of the works of Velazquez. Their testimony — with a single exception — is unanimous and strong in favor of the genuineness of the work.

The Committee on the Museum believes the picture to be genuine, and considers the Museum fortunate in its possession. It has assigned the picture as a purchase from the fund bequeathed to the Museum by the late Sarah Wyman Whitman.

### Japanese and Chinese Paintings in the Museum.

#### OKAKURA-KAKUZO.

The importance of the collection of Japanese and Chinese paintings in the Museum has been recognized for many years by students of Oriental art. Personally I have had opportunities in the past to know certain of its great treasures, but it is only upon examining it since last March that I begin to realize its preëminent place among the Oriental collections in the world. I do not now hesitate to say that in point of size it is unique, and that in quality it can only be inferior to the Imperial Museums of Nara and Kioto; while for the schools of Tokugawa painting it is unrivalled anywhere. In face of these facts I wonder that the collection has not hitherto received more general attention, or become the object of the serious consideration that it warrants.

Among the earliest Japanese paintings we have a Hokke-mandara of the eighth century, bearing an inscription to say that it was repaired by Chinkai (a celebrated monk-painter), in the year 1148. Paintings of the eighth century being extremely rare, there being, perhaps, only a dozen